V.

SCULPTURED STONES OF OLD LUCE CHURCH, WIGTOWNSHIRE. By The Rev. R. S. G. ANDERSON, B.D., F.S.A.Scot.

Old Luce Church stands on the hill-top immediately to the north of the main street of the village of Glenluce. The present building dates from 1814,[1] but is on the site of an older church which is said to have been erected in 1637. Traces of the latter are yet to be found; the most notable being an arched doorway, now built up, with fluted jambs and with drip course, which is hidden in a modern furnace-shed at the east end of the church. During the Episcopal supremacy the church may have been dedicated to St John, as the narrow street that runs up by the side of the old burial-ground on the east is named St John Street; but though the claim is made, there seems no record or tradition to substantiate it. This street leads up also to an old well, which still sends out its water from under an old stone coping, and which was in all likelihood the holy well of an early chapel on the church site near at hand. To the west of the present church is rising ground called Vicars-hill, from its being the site of the vicarage in episcopal times.

In pre-Reformation days the clachan by the church was not called Glenluce; the clachan of Glenluce was then in the Glen nearby the Mill.[2] The cluster of houses about the church site was known as Ballinclauch,[3] which Professor W. J. Watson considers stands for Baile nan Clach (homestead of the stones), which suggests that the place was stony or had a number of big stones lying about.

The first church or chapel on the present site of Old Luce Church takes us back far farther than the post-Reformation building; farther even than the Abbey itself, which was founded in 1190. Sculptured crosses were standing here in the tenth century, and even then the history of the local church may not have been young. There is no traditional dedication, or any sign of the early Ninianic mission; but the origin of the local church might possibly date back to the Anglian bishopric at Whithorn from A.D. 730 to 790.

A few weeks ago, a fragment of a crosshead was found at Kilncroft,

[1] *New Statistical Account*: Glenluce.

[2] Charter by the Commendator and Monks of Glenluce to the Earl of Cassilis, 1572; quoted by Rusk: *History of Parish and Abbey of Glenluce*, p. 137.

[3] *Place Names of Galloway*, Sir Herbert Maxwell.

that lies to the north of Old Luce Church. This croft once reached down practically to the churchyard wall, though it is now separated by the new cemetery carved from its own lands, and by a railway cutting. The proximity of the croft and the graveyard to each other in the dyke-building era explains how the relic could easily have reached the site of its discovery, and how also it came to be broken across, as it has been, to fit its niche in the dyke. Mr Hugh G. Clark, the tenant, found the fragment in the drystone dyke that separates the two fields of the holding, at a point about 200 yards due north of the church. Though diligent search was made, no further relics were found.

The stone is of the local greywacke, and measures 16½ inches hori-

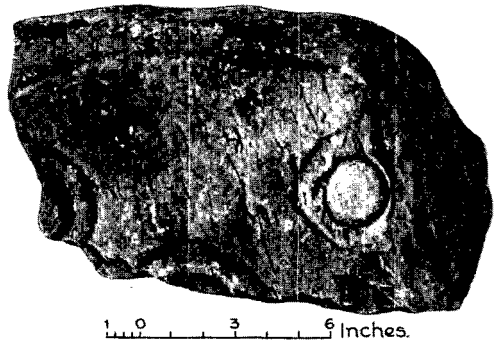

Fig. 1. Cross at Glenluce. (Face.)

zontally, 8¾ inches vertically, and is 3½ inches thick. There has been a roughly cut disc-head, but nothing remains of the shaft to tell how the cross was finished. Enough is left of the design to show that it has been of the distinctive Whithorn type; and that the same design has been cut on both faces, although that on the front now seems better wrought than that on the back. But this may be the result of weathering. On the front, the fragment preserves entire on the left the boss and ring with a broad band attachment to the plain cord that frames the stone (fig. 1). The right-hand boss and ring and border are entirely flaked off. Two inches or so of the top of the central ring remains. Fortunately one arm of the cross is practically complete, showing it to have been fan-shaped, with inward curving sides with a marginal moulding, graceful in its curves, and having the wider and more unusual entrances between the arms. It has been an equal-armed cross with the usual five rings, of the Whithorn type. The reverse shows only

portions of three separate rings and bosses; and little more than one arm, all rudely cut, and showing little skill or taste (fig. 2). The simplicity and feeling and good execution in the front would lead us to place the stone at a period when the workman felt that the possibilities of the simple lines of this style were not yet exhausted, and considerably before the ornamented and more florid type that date about A.D. 1000 [1] had come into vogue.

The *Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Galloway* [2] has the following note: "Beside the door of the Chapter House (of Glenluce Abbey) lies a slab of yellow sandstone, . . . on which is incised an equal-armed cross, with the arms expanded and squared, and the angles at the intersections rounded. It was discovered within the Chapter House in 1884."

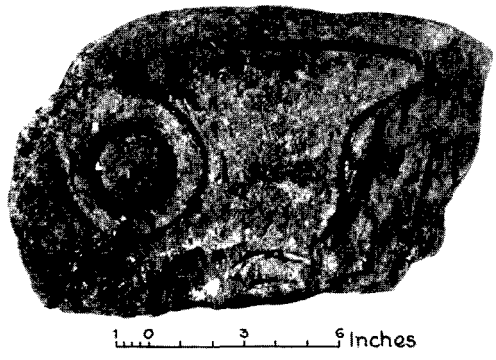

Fig. 2. Cross at Glenluce. (Back.)

This cross is older than the Abbey, and possibly was brought here from the Old Luce burial-ground for preservation, or amongst other stones to be used when changes were being made in the Chapter House. There is a local tradition, however, of a chapel having once stood between the Abbey and the Back o' the Wa' farm, where there is now a group of trees and faint traces of building, turf-covered. The cross might have come from a burial-ground there, though no tradition or record exists.

The cross-slab as it is to-day is about 19 inches square, but on the left a section of the side has been cut off taking away part of the arm, whilst at the foot, from the same cause, part of the lower arm is also missing (fig. 3). As it remains now, the sculpture measures 17 inches long by 18 inches broad, and when whole must have been about 22 inches by 21 inches. The arm at the top is 13 inches long, and the right arm $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

[1] *Official Guide to Whithorn Priory*, p. 15.

[2] *Wigtownshire: Old Luce*, No. 299, p. 108.

The formation of the cross is curious and interesting. Judging by the details, the rustic sculptor was well acquainted with both the Whithorn type with its rings, and the Northumbrian free-armed head. In combining the two he has produced on his slab a hammer-headed cross.

Fig. 3. Cross-slab at Glenluce Abbey.

Whether this is evolution or imitation it is difficult to say, but appearances are in favour of the former. The cross seems to be early. There is nothing to suggest that the sculptor was acquainted with the uncouth heaviness of design that marked the developed hammer-head, whether free-armed or on a slab.[1] The circles are made complete, whereas he could have saved himself work by leaving the part at the armhole uncut, and at the same time have made it more like the more developed and more fashionable of late examples, such as that of Kilmorie Chapel, Kirkcolm.[2] There is no suggestion either that the Whithorn type had yet reached its distinctive shape. There is no disc-head, and only four rings are used; and the armholes are not yet opened. It seems as if both the Whithorn type and the hammer-head were still evolving, and had not reached their peak, or the fact would have been reflected more clearly in this slab. The sculptor was evidently a rural workman, but he was not a blunderer. He shows the same ingenuity in simplicity and economy in means as the workman who wrought the Brighouse cross[3] of the Whithorn type, achieving it by five circles, two lines, and the stone's edges. This Old Luce sculptor accomplishes his end by four circles and four bent or squared lines, and does so not ungracefully. The cross is in fact more graceful than the late hammer-heads. Though of the rude monument class, such as we might look for in the burial-ground of a simple clachan, and only one example, we may be justified in our inference that it belongs to an early date, probably not later than about the middle of the tenth century.

Another cross, in addition to the above mentioned, was found in Glenluce Abbey, but unfortunately has disappeared. In the *Proceedings*, vol. xxxiii. p. 172, Rev. George Wilson reported: "When some repairs were being made a few years ago (before 1899) there was found above the

[1] Cf. *Northumbrian Crosses*, W. G. Collingwood, figs. 112, 113.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 113.
[3] *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lvii, p. 17.

Chapter House, Glenluce Abbey, the upper part of a cross which had been broken across, and used in a newer part of the building." This is evidently quite a different cross from that found in the Chapter House. "It is an ice-polished grey Silurian sandstone, with an incised cross in outline, and two holes cut through." It has evidently been more of the Whithorn type than the previous one.

In the east wall of the north transept of Old Luce Church, to the right of the window at the head of the outside stair, with the rain-spout coming down between them, are the fragments of two early crosses. A third is to be seen on the north wall of the east extension of the church, close to the left of the doorway on the same landing.[1]

This last is the easiest to decipher. On it still remains one complete arm of the expanding type, incised; the inter-arm space being parabolic in shape, and containing a triangular key-pattern in relief. The cross is contained by two incised circles, having a ring in relief between them; the inner uniting the details of the cross. The diameter of cross and rings is about 1 foot. On the margin of the slab is an incised border of key pattern about 4 inches deep, consisting of two facing rectangular turns alternating.

The fragment nearest the window on the transept, shows a portion of an incised cross evidently of a similar pattern to the above. The difference between the fragments lies in this one having a triangular corner space filled by two strands of cord that form a knot. None of the rest of the border remains to show any further design. An ornamented border round the head appears in Whithorn itself in a ring of pellets, about A.D. 1000.[2]

The third fragment from being rather deeply inset in the wall, and coated thickly with whitewash, is difficult to decipher. Most probably it is part of a cross-slab, but it is impossible to say whether the arms were connected by a ring. The arms are of the expanding type, and are in relief, but are hollowed within, each holding a triquetra in relief. At the crossing, in the centre, there is a small circle with boss. A stone somewhat similarly designed is found at Whithorn.[3] It has the triquetra on the arms, but the expanding arms are incurved, and the inter-arm spaces are circles with narrow entrances—more in the orthodox Whithorn manner. The *Official Guide* places it in the eleventh century,[4] and as one of the latest of the disc-faced school. So far as the meagre details allow a verdict, the triquetra being an important witness, the

[1] *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xliv. p. 354.
[2] *Official Guide to Whithorn Priory, op. cit.*, fig. 33, p. 22; p. 15.
[3] *Ibid.*, fig. 35, p. 22. *Early Christian Monuments*, No. 528, p. 492.
[4] *Official Guide to Whithorn Priory*, p. 15.

Old Luce cross is doubtless as late as the Whithorn fragment. The other two crosses of this little group, with their modifications and divergences from the type, suggesting foreign influences, may safely be relegated to the eleventh century also.

Fig. 4.

The most complete of the early crosses connected with Old Luce Church is a standing slab, sculptured with the cross *pattée*, surmounting a long panel containing two interlaced double-cords, above a separate small horizontal panel with a four-cord plait, which is now preserved in the National Museum of Antiquities (fig. 4). The cross is 5 feet in height, 1 foot 3½ inches in breadth, and 5 inches in thickness and was found in the graveyard.[1] The *Official Guide to Whithorn Priory* says, with reference to it: "With the Scottish type illustrated at Glenluce and Minnigaff begins a new phase of art, by this time we have to deal no longer with Whithorn and its old tradition. Galloway has become decentralised." [2] This Old Luce cross, however, though it has lost much of its resemblance to its ancestral type, has still sufficient remaining to show its origin and to claim kinship. The design in the long panel is of two interlacing strands of double-beaded cord, crossing one another in the twisted rings and central intervals between these; the two ends of each strand terminating in spirals, the spirals of one strand ending in the lower inter-arm spaces of the cross, and those of the other tucked away in the right-hand corner at the foot of the panel. Apart probably from the spiral terminations, and from the corresponding strands in the two stones being in the reverse position, over and under, this pattern is exactly the same as that on the back of the cross-shaft, No. 25, in the *Official Guide to Whithorn Priory*, which is classed there as one of the Master's later efforts.[3] The expanding arms and the bosses are also familiar details of the old type, and the oval head containing these has in it the recollection of the disc. As we

[1] *Inventory for Wigtownshire*, No. 369, p. 127.
[2] *Official Guide to Whithorn Priory*, p. 23.
[3] *Ibid.*, fig. 25, back, p. 19; p. 15.

have seen already, overhead ornament was also a feature in late days. Repetition, re-arrangement, and modifications, without any signs of fresh inspiration, were signs that the Whithorn type had exhausted itself, and the old tradition was passing away. This cross may belong to about the middle of the eleventh century. There is as yet no sign of the changes and new ideas that we might expect to precede as well as follow the coming of the Normans towards the close of the century.

Rev. George Wilson has the following note in his paper on the Antiquities of Glenluce: [1] "Glenluce was a burgh of barony, and in the upper storey of the old gaol . . . I often saw a sculptured slab built in on edge over the fireplace. It was much defaced, but near the right hand it bore the figure of a stag running, with its tail turned into a leafy branch. At that time I knew nothing of the zoomorphic ornamentation of our sculptured stones; but my recollection of it is distinct. When this building was being altered for the County Police I was from home, and found this slab had been broken up by the masons." This type of cross-slab, with foliaceous ornamentation, was a prevailing one in West Highland monuments from the fifteenth century to the Reformation.[2] The intimate relations between the Western Islands and Galloway for centuries make it no marvel to find an example here.

[1] *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxxiii. p. 173.

[2] *Early Christian Monuments*, pt. 1, p. 61.